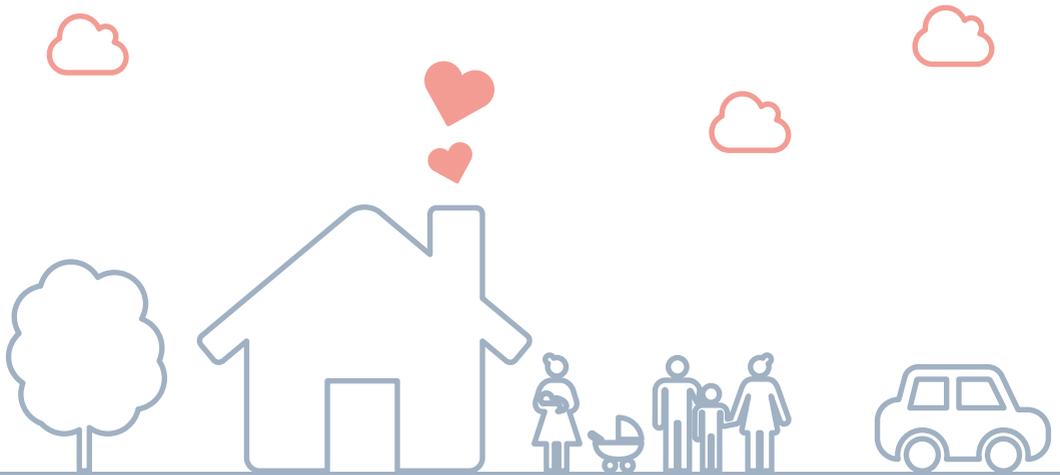


# How to Find an AWESOME Au Pair



Who won't crash your car,  
steal your husband and  
terrorise your home

Julie MacDonald

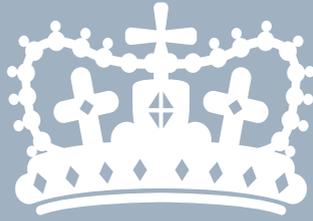
# How to Find an Awesome Au Pair Who Won't Crash Your Car, Steal Your Husband and Terrorise Your Home

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A number of contributors mentioned in this book have asked that we protect their privacy. As a result, the author has changed their names, specific geographic locations and other identifying details related to their stories.

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**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
HIRE  
AN AU PAIR**

# Introduction: What can I expect from this guide?

*“There’s a lid for every pot and an au pair for every family. It just takes a little bit of work to find the perfect fit.”*

- NZ, host mum

Truth be told, this guide cannot prevent an imperfect au pair from entering the orbit of your home.

Because, just as there are no perfect au pairs, there are no perfect host families. No book can guarantee your husband’s bum won’t be pinched by a flirty au pair or stop your car from becoming a battering ram on the school run.

BUT I can promise you this guide will deliver you from the hell that is hiring the down right *wrong* au pair for *your* family.

We’ve been there, not once but twice and it was an unbearably stressful experience for all of us. Our first au pair was delightful and we loved her to bits, but she struggled with basic household tasks, which became a major drain on our relationship. When our another pair walked out with 12 hours notice after our family had tenderly held her hand through a deeply personal trauma, I was raw and devastated at what I felt was a breach of trust in my own home.

Over the months that followed, I reached out to other host families, joined Facebook groups and devoured every piece of information I could on why au pair relationships go wrong.

I was suddenly 14 again trying to figure out why I’d been dumped after pouring love and trust into a relationship.

I was on a mission to figure out exactly what it takes to choose the right au pair for your family and nail being the best god damned host family on the planet!

But what I discovered shocked me.

Every single family I met or spoke to was grappling with this subject; How to hire an awesome au pair? Even the experienced host families spoke of nightmare scenarios, au pairs disappearing in the middle of the night, hiring great au pairs whose CV’s were dynamite but then could barely get out of bed in the morning.

Families who'd paid agencies hundreds of pounds still spoke of wanting guidance and hand-holding going above and beyond what the agencies deliver.

Scottish host mum, Angela told me, " We paid hundreds of pounds, thinking the agencies would do a better job than us. They gave us loads of background on the au pairs but we still had no idea how to choose well. I kind of wanted them to say this is the one for you but we fluffed our way through interviews and had a couple of girls who were lovely but ended up being not quite right for us. It was really hard having someone unhappy in our home and we felt pretty powerless to make things better."

And then I turned to the au pairs themselves. I spoke at length to twenty au pairs from eight different countries and they too were struggling to understand what was expected of them. One told me, "I loved the first two weeks and then I was alone, looking after three children with no help from the parents. I was only nineteen and I didn't know how to talk to them about what I was feeling. They wanted me to be able to do everything really well and then for me to disappear the rest of the time. But I was shy and actually a bit afraid in my new country. I left after 3 months of long hours, really disappointed because I saved for my ticket working odd jobs."

But some loved the journey with their families. German au pair Anna explained to me, "My family were super organised and interested in me and my experience. When I had loads of questions for them, they answered them and I felt like they really thought about having me in their home. It was amazing and they're like a second family to me now."

Others were deeply critical of a system that in Europe, Australia and New Zealand seemed to promise a lot and then spat them out in a mess of broken expectations. The experience sold by some agencies was almost criminal and others who'd matched with families online sometimes found themselves at the mercy of cruel and terribly disorganised, chaotic families.

Further investigation with agencies provided the final piece of the jigsaw with almost all admitting that as the demands of the au pair role have grown, they struggle to cap host family expectations *and* those of their au pair candidates.

A London based agency summed it up, "The aupair world is suffering from an expectation gap both from au pairs and families. The role is not what it used to be and although we encourage families and au pairs to be honest with each other, it does sometimes go wrong and both parties can be devastated when it does."

It's a potentially toxic problem for families who are in desperate need of flexible help and support in their homes and I became obsessed with understanding the secret of successful host family/au pair relationships.

What makes some amazing and others toxic?

For the past two years, I have been researching the whole crazy and fascinating subject of hiring and managing au pairs across the world. To date, I've carried out in-depth

interviews with serial au pair families, agencies and au pairs themselves to try to uncover the hidden tips and tricks of dynamite host families and fantastic au pairs. Between them these families have hosted 301 au pairs and counting!

I have scoured message boards and Facebook groups.

I've dredged the comments of blogs and articles on the most searched for au pair problems and host family fears.

And here's the good news, there is a *simple secret* to finding great au pairs that will fit snugly in your family and give you the flexibility and support you so desperately crave.

Despite our families and au pairs coming from a huge range of social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, my research found that they do indeed have a super power when it comes to excelling at the au pair game.

In fact all of the awesome au pair families I have met, interviewed and contacted online have one vital thing in common.

## A surprising secret

Over the years, these families maddened by the torment of a bad hire in their own home, have created a surprisingly simple system that reduces the chances of hiring the wrong au pair to almost zero.

And this guide is an opportunity to share their system and the detail of their experiences so that you too can skip that stress of a nightmare au pair and find the right fit.

Maybe you're a family who likes to go with their gut when it comes to au pairs, maybe the thought of adhering to a 'system' sounds downright dull and frankly a bit depressing.

Or maybe you know lots of other host families who seem to do pretty well without over-complicating things?

Meet LazyAmerican host mom (her self appointed title by the way), with four kids to look after, two dogs and a successful fitness business run from home. She admits to being someone who doesn't like systems or structure and who definitely trusted her gut during her relaxed and conversational interviews with au pair candidates.

She believed that the American agency system, which matches au pairs and host families using all sorts of extensive data and interviewing, would be enough to deliver a heaven sent au pair right to her doorstep. Instead the families suffered "three lukewarm" au pair relationships that "gave me a giant headache" and "put my relationship with my kids and husband under massive strain."

LA host mum reached out to her agency and to the au pair counsellor in her area, but there was nowhere for her to vent honestly about her frustrations and figure out what the hell was going wrong!

Annoyingly for LA host mom, it was actually her husband who came up with the solution. He ran a local business and decided that after au pair three they'd hire their au pairs like he hired staff in his firm. LA host mum was horrified at the thought of asking a million questions and seeming like a "control freak family from hell."

Their neat little system was born and just like that, no more au pair mismatches.

She explained, "I wanted the whole thing to feel natural and not like we were creating a business sort of relationship. I like people to think I'm laid-back and whilst I can be, I realised I'd been painting a picture of our family that was pretty far from the truth. As soon as we started taking the whole thing really seriously, we got back out what we put in, which was great; au pairs that *got* our family. It was pretty weird to realise that I'd been blaming these poor girls and actually I was to blame for not being honest and asking the right questions."

In Europe, where most families are choosing to hire their au pairs online, I discovered another laid back host family, who also reached the conclusion that their super casual approach to hiring au pairs was heaping misery on their already stressed out family.

Laidback Smith family live in Kent, Southern England with two young kids and two very busy jobs. This is how they uncovered the secret to finding their perfect au pair.

*"Honestly we were going through one au pair every six months. We decided that it was too much work to find the absolute right fit so we'd get the 'oh they'll do' candidate and have them for a short amount of time. Then that turned out to be so draining, having to re-hire every six months and then feel pretty disappointed every time. I didn't want to invest too much but that was a big mistake. We always left it too late to hire and then felt like we'd have to grab one of these kids quickly as there were so many gorgeous looking families on [aupairworld.com](http://aupairworld.com)! Then my friend who works in HR and has had really good au pairs lent me her list of questions that she asks, told me what strategy she uses to get the best candidate for them and also how to write a really honest profile. It seemed too simple to be true but it worked and we've never looked back."*

Every family and au pair I spoke with felt the same, they all wanted to know how to find the right fit.

It seems host families and au pairs don't want to make each other miserable any more.

So with their permission, I share with you, ‘The Awesome Au pair Guide’ born out of a mission to help as many au pairs and host families as possible across the globe.

It’s chock full of downright honest and sometimes controversial advice for hiring and managing awesome au pairs. This is stuff that no agency can tell you, that no au pair would have the guts to say to your face and that you absolutely cannot afford to be without whether you are a first time host family, or longer in the tooth at the au pair game.

Everything in the book is straight from the family front line.

At the heart of the book is a simple proven, tried and tested system for hiring and managing au pairs. If you are using an agency, this book will help you understand how to filter the colossal amount of candidates and information the agencies send. It will answer your biggest questions about how to interview an au pair successfully and then how to manage them like a boss whilst continuing to spin all the other crazy plates in your life with kids.

If you’re going online to find your saviour au pair, the guide will take you through the process most agencies and families use, but at a fraction of the price. You’ll discover how to figure out *exactly* what your family needs and which characteristics you’ll need to look for to make an awesome relationship with your au pair. We’ll also tell you how to interview your au pair to uncover the true best fit for your family, using our NLP tested au pair interviewing strategy.

I owe a huge debt to the families, au pairs and experts who have contributed to this guide, and I hope it will give you the ultimate edge in finding and managing an awesome au pair.

After all, we need each other more than ever, so it’s time to start getting it right.

## Terrifying Questions

So right now, are you one of those families struggling with childcare, thinking about taking the leap and becoming a host family?

You know you need help but the idea of a stranger living in your home is pretty bloody terrifying?

You have a million and one questions AND you’ve heard the au pair horror stories and don’t want that to be *your* family.

Or maybe right freaking now, there’s a lukewarm au pair relationship happening in your home and driving you potty.

So relax, grab a glass or a cup of tea, and a big slice of cake and let me welcome you to 'Find an Awesome Au Pair', an interactive book that's been created by host families for host families, to help your family avoid the nasty pitfalls most beginner, and some more experienced, host families make.

We've pulled together the most vital, funny and downright honest advice from host families across the globe so that your au pair experience and that of the young person potentially living in your home is as close to awesome as any house with jobs and children in it ever can be.

It's awesome advice all in the one place!

## **What this guide includes:**

- 10 short chapters stuffed full of vital advice from the host family front line – we'll be with you every step of the way, from figuring out what sort of au pair you need, which nationality, how to find them, interview them, manage and motivate them in your home. All without losing your mind in the process.
- Revealing stories shared by host mums and dads, covering the most talked about, frustrating and amazing parts of welcoming an au pair into your family.
- Practical steps for writing an amazing profile that will attract the right sort of au pair.
- Practical steps for interviewing your au pair like a pro.
- A must read chapter on the Hidden Psychology that could sabotage your au pair relationship.
- The 'Freaky Families' intuitive questionnaire and au pair 'Qualities Short List' designed by experienced host families to help you identify quickly what sort of au pair you need. You can download it from [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com)
- A fill in the blanks timetable template you can fill in and give to your au pair to make sure your home runs smoothly.
- If you upgrade to silver level membership at [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com) you can also expand your membership to include a House Guide Template full of tried and tested host family rules that work to de-stress your relationship with your au pair.
- An editable welcome letter and commitment 'contract' that you can tweak to suit your family. You can upgrade your membership at anytime at [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com)
- You'll also have access to a jumbo, expanded chapter on interviewing au pairs. 'The Awesome Au Pair Interview Guide' includes a series of questions vetted by

recruitment professionals and host families that should be used to interview your au pair. They're sorted by the characteristic and skills you are looking for and designed to cut through the prepared answers most young people will give to get straight to the heart of whether you'll be able to live together and trust them with your kids. One of the world's top NLP masters, also a mum and granny has helped me to build an interview strategy you can trust! Again, it's all at [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com)

- If you visit us at [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com) you'll find an additional series of interviews and podcasts and videos with host families and professionals designed to partner with this guide and to make your au pair journey a less bumpy ride.

## Why should I trust the guide?

Quite simply, every shred of advice and information in this book comes straight from the hearts and bosoms of our trusted, veteran host families.

My mission started off as a simple questionnaire of 20 questions directed at host families in my local area for a blog post I was considering writing about why host family relationships with their au pairs go wrong.

I was raw and devastated after an au pair relationship in my own home turned sour and I was determined never to have to go through the same trauma again.

Thanks to the wonder of Facebook and the internet my little questionnaire found its way to many more host families than I'd first anticipated and they were all so desperate to share their own disastrous, embarrassing and wonderful experiences, that I ended up with over 50 completed questionnaires.

It seemed like my mission to improve the relationships between host families and au pairs was something that struck a very definite chorus across the globe.

Even better was the fact that many of the families that contacted me were on their 9th or 10th au pair, so they had enormous, boatloads of sage advice to give the rest of us, still on the tender, early steps of the journey. So far our host families, including ours, have together hired and managed 301 au pairs and counting!

Some families didn't mind sharing their experiences but didn't want to be identified by name in the book, so I decided to give each host family a 'codename' to try as much as possible to respect their privacy. I have also merged some of their stories and tweaked their quotes to prevent any of our families' privacy being affected.

The host families who filled in the questionnaire come from six different countries and their social economic circumstances are also reasonably varied, so you can be reassured that the advice in this guide is not just suitable for one *sort* of family.

# Who is the guide suitable for?

The guide is suitable for any host family hiring and managing au pairs anywhere in the world.

Whether you are a beginner host family or simply one that wants to supercharge its au pair relationships, the guide is about putting in place a simple system that will help you navigate the torturous pitfalls all host families endure at some point.

This book does not go into granular detail about hiring au pairs in specific countries as there are already loads of brilliant host family resources online specific to different, national systems in each place.

I have included a helpful list at the back of this book showing you where you can look for more country specific advice about paying your au pair, taxes, immigration rules and so on.

# What if I get totally overwhelmed?

There's so much guidance and so many little known, fascinating tips in this guide, that it would be quite natural to start reading it and then go straight to freaking out that there's a lot to take in and you're already juggling a million plates already.

I totally understand.

I too have read lots of 'How to' books that end up being used as doorstops when my brain exploded part way through the second chapter.

I have as much as possible simplified every part of the process and when you log in to the website [theawesomeaupair.com](http://theawesomeaupair.com) members area, you will be able to go through the guide reading a chapter, watching the accompanying videos and filling in all of the accessories as you go.

So by all means only read the chapters that really resonate with you, or if systems and structure aren't your thing, simply complete and download the accessories you do need and park the rest for a rainy day.

If there is anything in the guide that doesn't make sense or there's something in particular you need help with, sign up to our gold members forum and we'll use the community's collective brain power to support you and put things right.

Happy au pair hunting,

Julie Mac